

This Thanksgiving we are alone.

We usually have old friends visit, two classical musicians, a husband and wife, who make only one stipulation for their visit: « No recorded music, Lorne. Music is work for us. They are thankful for the silence they find here in Dyers Bay.

But this year they aren't with us, and there is recorded music.
Rather a lot of it.

And because I am not entertaining our two good, old friends (cooking, washing dishes, walking, talking) I am able to continue uninterrupted my autumn reading project.

This is the essays and books of the great modern Christian mystic, Simone Weil.

She wrote brilliantly on a great many topics, but she had, like all great writers, really only one, simple theme she reiterates.

Her theme was this: prayer is attention.

Prayer is learning, slowly and patiently, to give your whole mind to something.

You start perhaps with an autumn leaf, noting its colour, texture, shape. How it lies on the table in front of you, its crispness as you pick it up.

Then you can move on to something more complex, maybe a box of clementines. The orange of the oranges, the little bumps, the plastic netting holding them in the thin-wooded box, the inevitable rotten one you didn't notice in the store.

Slowly you learn to give your full attention to more and more complicated things, until you arrive at: your neighbour.

When you can see your neighbour as complete and as individual and as important as you see yourself, you then love him or her fully.

And in that love, or through it, you love God fully.

And what underlies and helps you progress in becoming more and more attentive to the world, your neighbour and Him?

His grace.

Always His grace.

I am still, though, somewhere between the elm leaf and the rotten clementine.

But with music playing in the house for the first time in many years on Thanksgiving I will see if I can start, with His help, to get beyond the clementines.

Lorne Ellaschuk